



PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MUSCATINE MAN'S HOME LOST TO MORNING FIRE

Subzero cold, high winds hinder effort to battle Friday morning house fire

MUSCATINE, Iowa – A Muscatine man escaped injury but his home is a total loss following a three-alarm fire Friday morning that was hampered by subzero temperatures and strong winds.

The Muscatine Joint Communications Center (MUSCOM) received a 911 call at approximately 7:46 a.m. Friday (Dec. 23) of a fire in the rear of a single family residence at 118 West 9th Street in Muscatine. Upon arrival fire crews found heavy smoke coming from the rear of the structure with several interior rooms involved in the structure. Firefighting efforts were hindered by the subzero temperatures and the strong winds that fanned the fire.

The occupant of the home was able to escape the structure uninjured. He was able to take one of his dogs with him, but could not convince another dog to leave. That dog is still missing.

Fire crews initiated an exterior fire attack and were able to keep the fire from spreading to other nearby structures. Additional resources were requested in the form of mutual aid from area departments and a callback of off duty personnel. Once the main body was extinguished crews were able to begin a fire attack on the interior. The fire was considered under control at 9:33 a.m., but crews remained on the scene to ensure all hot spots were extinguished.



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Fire officials have completed the on scene investigation. A final cause has yet to be determined but it does appear to be an accidental fire. Initial reports indicate there was no activation of any smoke alarm. The residence is a total loss with an estimated fire loss in excess of \$150,000. The American Red Cross was called to assist the residents of the building and 1-800-BOARDUP secured the residence and provided additional support as well.

There were no injuries to any citizens and no reported injuries to response personnel. The extreme weather did cause some minor exposure issues and created a large hazard due to extensive ice buildup.

First responders faced a variety of issues battling the fire in extreme weather conditions. The cold makes everything that is hit with water or overspray to ice up, which can create some massive ice buildup in these conditions.

“With the roads being slick from the snow it slows our response and makes some responses - like driving the aerial up a slick hill - more challenging” Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Marshal Mike Hartman said. “We did have a slight issue getting the aerial ladder back in place due to ice.”

With this location being on a hill and the entire street wet from the fire attack, the street will be a solid chunk of ice until it warms up enough for the salt to be effective.

Muscatine Public Works Department sent crews to salt and sand the area and will return later in the day to treat the street again. The public is advised to steer clear of this location as the street will remain hazardous until temperatures rise.

Another item that comes up sometimes in winter is frozen hoses and pumps.



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“We have to leave our hose nozzles running because if we shut them down all the way, the hose will freeze solid,” Hartman said. “And it is hard to break apart and transport 50 foot sections of frozen hose.”

Hartman added that the cold can also impact the pumping. A minor issue of a pump drain freezing can lead to bigger issues.

“If we are not careful we can get the water inside the pump frozen solid,” Hartman said.

The Muscatine Police Department provided manpower to assist fire crews and were instrumental in setting up a warming area. Muscatine Emergency Management responded as well to provide support.

“I feel very proud watching the firefighters and police work together as one family,” Captain Tony Kies of the Muscatine Police Department said. “This is absolutely not a day for this type of work. Wilton and Fruitland were amazing as well.”

The Muscatine Fire Department was also assisted by fire crews from the Fruitland Fire Department and the Wilton Fire Department. Approximately 25 firefighters responded to the fire.

Residents are reminded that working smoke alarms save lives. With the holidays ahead of us this is a good time to check that all smoke detectors in your home are working properly, replacing batteries or the whole unit itself as needed.

About the Muscatine Fire Department:

The Muscatine Fire Department provides fire and emergency medical services, rescues (high angle, rope, water, etc.), building inspections, and public education for the City of Muscatine, and the surrounding unincorporated areas of Muscatine County with a combined population of 43,000 across 145 square miles while also providing HAZMAT for Muscatine, Louisa, Washington, Keokuk, and Henry counties. MFD firefighters and paramedics responded to 5,238



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calls in 2019. The Muscatine Fire Department began as a volunteer fire company on January 7, 1875 and was established as a full-time department in January 1916. The Muscatine Fire Department ambulance service received the 2012 Career Ambulance service of the Year Award from Iowa Emergency Medical Services.

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